



# Lisa Murkowski

U.S. Senator - Alaska

PIPELINE

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*Welcome to the first edition of my online newsletter. Periodically, I will be updating Alaskans on my work in Washington D.C. and on events of interest to the State. If you have received this in error, and wish to unsubscribe [click here](#). If you wish to contact my office, please [click here](#) or follow the links at the left of this message. I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Sincerely,*



## Energy Conference Begins...

This week, members of the House and Senate began meeting to finalize an energy bill and move toward producing a new energy policy for the country. We are very near producing an energy policy that is comprehensive and balanced. We have focused on conservation as well as production and we have emphasized renewable and alternative energy sources. Given that we are facing record high oil prices, it is good news for the nation that the Senate after 10 years of trying has finally approved an energy bill that has an excellent chance of becoming law by the end of this summer. This bill offers provisions to help us develop our oil, natural gas and coal resources and should help us tap our huge gas hydrate reserves. It offers to advance a lot of exciting possibilities for Alaska's future.

[Listen to Sen. Murkowski's Opening Statement From the Energy Conference](#)

[Read More About Aspects of the Energy Bill](#)

## An Important Program for Rural Health...

During an Indian Affairs Committee hearing last week, I urged the continuation of the Dental Health Aide Therapist Program in rural Alaska. The program, which has received support from the Indian Health Service and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, supplements dental care in rural Alaska with the use of trained dental therapists in areas where there are not full time dentists. We have a dentist shortage and a dental health crisis throughout rural Alaska. We also have the greatest state on earth and when we can't get the professionals into the villages, we need to be creative and do what we can to solve this problem. This program is very well thought-out and deserves an opportunity to prove itself.

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### **Working out the Differences in the Highway Bill...**

We are continuing our work on the Conference Committee to approve a final Highway Bill. The bill sets federal funding for transportation projects across the country for the next six fiscal years and contains authorization for important projects in Alaska. For rural Alaska, the bill authorizes the Denali Commission to plan, design, construct and maintain roads connecting remote Alaskan communities. The bill authorizes improvements to the Alaska Marine Highway System, such as the improvement or construction of ferry boats, terminals and approaches to ferry systems. Reliable transportation is critical to our national well-being and to the well-being of our economy. This is especially true in Alaska, where our road and transportation systems are woefully inadequate compared to the rest of the country. I'm hopeful that we will have a final bill ready for passage before the August recess.

### **Re-working the 9th Circuit...**

Recently, I was joined by a group of Senators in introducing legislation to split the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. My legislation, co-sponsored by Alaska's Ted Stevens, would create a new Twelfth Circuit comprised of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and Arizona. As it is currently constituted, the Ninth Circuit is simply too large. It encompasses nine states and some 1.4 million square miles. It is the largest of all U.S. Circuit Courts and larger than eight other circuits combined. The Ninth Circuit now handles more cases than any other circuit. Last year alone 14,272 cases were filed. The massive size and caseload of the Ninth Circuit results in a delay of justice and a difficulty for judges to review all of the issues covered. This is an important problem that needs to be resolved sooner than later and I'm hopeful we will be able to hold hearings on this legislation in the fall.



Sen. Murkowski and Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID)  
Discuss splitting the Ninth Circuit

### **Welcome Second Session Interns...**

We were joined this week by our second session of summer interns. These recent high school graduates from around Alaska will be working in my Washington office through the summer, helping with office tasks and learning about the work we are doing for Alaska.



Sen. Murkowski's 2005 2nd Session Interns

From left to right: (back row) Alexei Painter (Juneau), Andrew Gully (Fairbanks), Ted Madsen (Anchorage), Katelyn Baldwin (Wasilla), Katherine Senter (Anchorage), Luke Duddy (Anchorage); (front row): Shana Kim (Anchorage), Melissa Falcone (Anchorage), Haley Leder (Fairbanks), Megan Gregory (Kake).

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